

GORE

THE BLIND SENATOR FROM
OKLAHOMA
James Creelman

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The Blind Senator from Oklahoma

By

James Creelman

Illustrations from Photographs



HE visitor to Washington who looks down from the gallery upon the sleepy, green-carpeted Senate is sure to be impressed and puzzled, if not actually thrilled, by the presence of a blind man in that

droning citadel of federalism; a Senator without power to see, the youngest member of the "American House of Lords," representing the youngest State in the Union.

The days of romance and opportunity gone! Who can say that after seeing in the United States Senate a man sightless from boyhood, who, through years of poverty and darkness, smiled down and talked down every obstacle that lay between his obscure youth and the great ambition of his life?

If the story of Senator Gore, of Oklahoma, could serve no other purpose than to illustrate how a brave heart and persistent ambition can overcome even the greatest difficulties in life, it would be worth telling.

Loyalty to a set purpose, maintained resolutely through twenty-five years of bitter struggle, raised this poor blind American boy to a seat in the most distinguished law-making body in the world, although he sometimes lived on the verge of starvation. Nothing could shake his determination to be a Senator. He had no eyes, but he had a tongue. He had no money, but he had courage. He was obscure, but he had a high ambition. He could not see the world about him, but he had a smile to win it, a perseverance to compel its admiration and support.

"Prosperity asks for fidelity; adversity exacts it," said Seneca.

A few months after Mississippi was readmitted to the Union in 1870, Thomas Pryor Gore was born on an eighty-acre farm, thirty miles from the nearest railway.

It was a miserable soil, set among the scrubby little clay hills that divide the waters of the Tombigbee and Mississippi rivers. The Gores lived in a three-room cottage and raised cotton, corn and hogs. The father of the family was a sturdy, deep-chested farmer of Irish origin and colonial descent, who had a hard time in wringing a living out of the infertile land.

Here the boy grew up among the creeks and pines, a stocky, gray-eyed little fellow who could outrun any of his companions. When he was six years old, the village of Walthall was established in the woods nearby and the Gore family went there to live. Young Tom attended a small school set among the trees outside of the village.

At the age of eight years the boy's left eye was blinded by an accidental blow from a stick. Three years later he was employed as a page in the Mississippi Senate and boarded at the house of Senator J. Z. George in Jackson. One day, while playing with a cross-bow, an arrow entered his right eye and destroyed his sight.

As the wounded lad was carried home he stretched his hands out and moaned, "Don't tell my mother. Please, don't tell my mother."

"I'm only a pore man," ses Jocko, "but I'm willin' to go as high as \$100, and my pal 'ill put up the same."

"Not enough," ses Hackett, shakin' his head. "It 'ud be a horrible wrench to my feelin's to leave here. Make it \$300, that's \$150 apiece, and I'll do it."

They argued with him, but he wouldn't go down a cent.

"Them's my terms," ses he; "take 'em or leave 'em."

At last they agreed to give him wot he asked, with the understandin' that the fellow wot won the widow was to pay back the other half of the money.

"There's only one thing more," ses Jocko. "Wot guarantee have we got that you'll go when you get the money?"

"The word of a soldier and a gentleman," ses Hackett; "and if that ain't enough you can come to the station and see me off. Bring the money round to-morrow and let me see you mail it to New York in care of my brother. I'll start east the next day. That'll give me enough time to fix up a little business I've got to attend to here."

Next day they met him as they promised and posted the money before his eyes.

"I told Mrs. Moggs I was goin' away," ses Hackett.

"How'd she take it?" asks Jocko. "Did she feel bad?"

"Can't say as she did," ses Hackett. "She only said it was a good time of the year for travelin' and

that she'd always heard that New York was a nice town."

"You heard wot he said," ses Perry after the soldier left 'em. "Mebbe we might as well have saved our money."

"Not us," ses Jocko. "That's only her artfulness; she didn't want him to see how much she cared. It's wuth the price to see the last of him and know he's out of the way."

Next day they hustled down to the deepot at train time and there was Hackett, dressed up in a bran' new suit of clothes and a big bokay in his buttonhole.

"Come this way," he ses, after shakin' hands with them. "Here's my train on the second track."

They stood waitin' until the conductor yelled "all aboard" and Hackett swung himself onto the steps of the coach.

"Good-by, lads," ses he. "I'll never forget you. Give my love to the widder's mother."

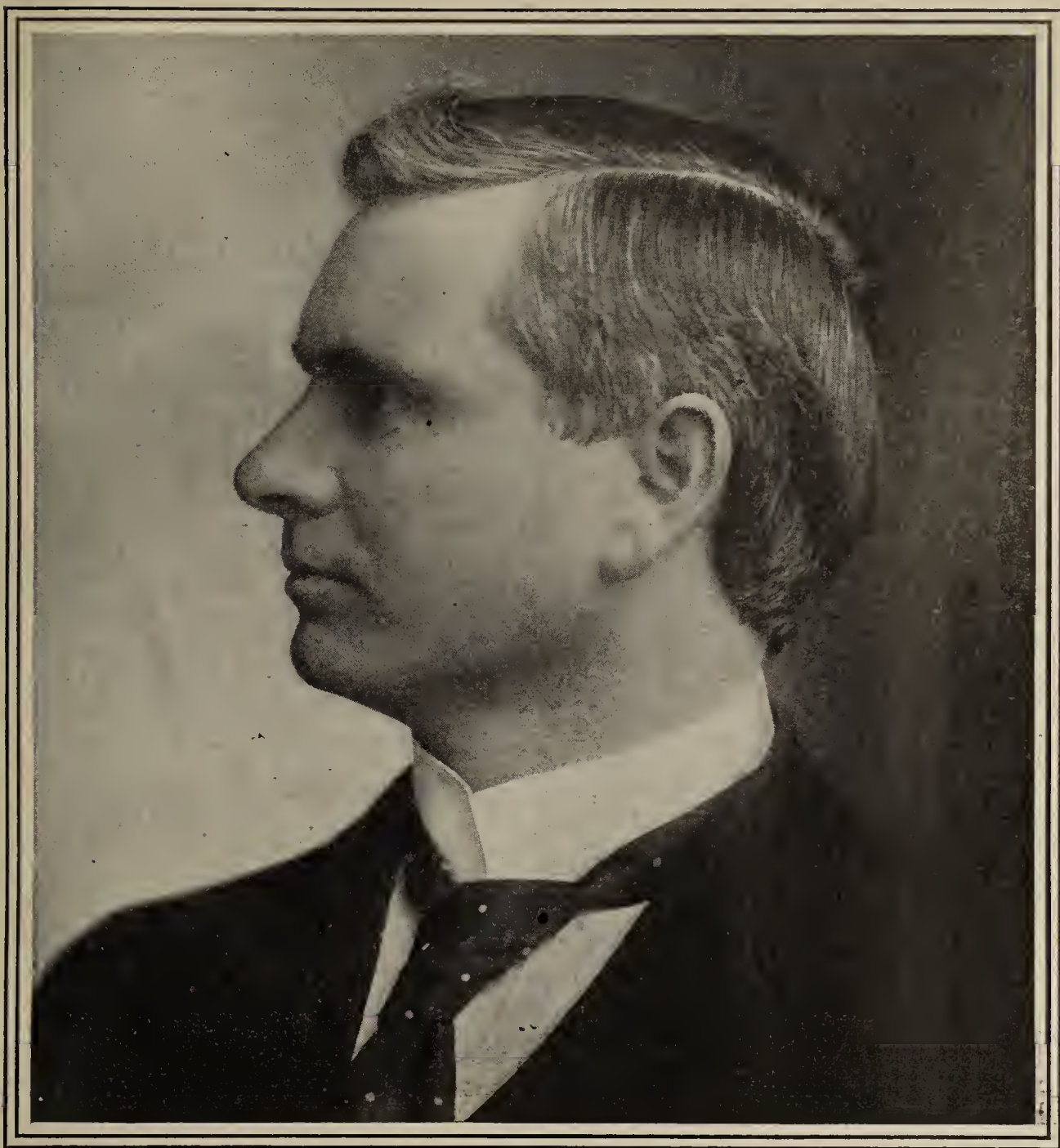
"The widder's mother," ses Jocko, wonderin'. "Was he makin' up to the old woman, as well as the daughter?"

Perry didn't answer. His mouth was wide open and his eyes gogglin' like a man in a fit. He grabbed Jocko's arm and p'inted to the platform of the next car. There stood Mrs. Moggs with Hackett alongside of her, smilin' all over her face and wavin' a handkercher.

"My wife sends her regards, boys," roars Hackett, and the train moves out and leaves 'em starin' helpless at each other.



ARTHUR WILLIAM BROWN



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THOMAS PRYOR GORE, THE BLIND UNITED STATES SENATOR OF OKLAHOMA

It would be hard to find a darker prospect in life than that which confronted the blind Mississippi boy. Let the youth who imagines that he has not had a fair start in the world consider this cottage-born child, reared in Jefferson Davis's State after the un pitying consequences of the Civil War, and say whether it be not true that "the dice of God are always loaded," that there is a way out of the darkest and direst place in society, that there is no human condition that does not admit hope.

Little Tom's father took him to New Orleans, where an oculist partly restored sight

to his left eye; but in time even this faint ability to discern large objects was to disappear and leave him in lifelong darkness.

On his return to his home in Walthall the boy passed his first winter listening to the readings of his mother and sister. "The Lives of Self-Made Men" stirred courage and ambition in him. In the following winter, and for several winters afterwards, he was able to grope his way to and from school, which was three-quarters of a mile away from the Gore cottage. His father, meantime, had been elected chancery clerk of the village and was able to provide decently for the family.

He was a grave boy, given to introspection and subject to fits of deep melancholy. He had a noble and sensitive face and carried himself with such a peculiar dignity that his family called him "the Governor." His favorite amusement was chicken-fighting—born, perhaps, of an instinct for battle which he could not otherwise indulge—but usually he would dimly watch others and wonder how a boy could see any fun in playing. Nature was getting him ready for his destiny of complete sightlessness.

In spite of his affliction young Gore managed to stand at the head of his class in school and at the age of seventeen years entered a normal school which was opened. Here he gradually became totally blind, yet he mastered the high school course.

His father wanted to send him to an asylum for the blind, but the boy protested against segregation. He refused to be confined to the narrow life of any special class. He begged to be allowed to associate with the well and able, to take his chances in the ordinary world about him.

A great ambition had grown in his breast. He had attended a school debating club and had found that he could debate with his fellows on equal terms. Why might he not rise in politics? It was a time when oratory counted in Mississippi. Stricken and helpless after a desolating war, tortured and insulted by bitter years of political reconstruction, the South needed voices to utter her soul.

This was the real crossroads in the life of Thomas Pryor Gore—his refusal to accept the monasticism of an asylum for the blind, his determination to enter into the struggle of life without asking for odds.

"In those days," said Senator Gore recently, "I felt more dejection than despair. I had ambition, but there seemed to be no opportunity to work it out; but in my heart of hearts I had the assurance that the opportunity would come, even though it seemed like trying to scale the heights of the impossible. I knew that I could debate, but I was poor and I had neither powerful family connections nor influential friends. The great difficulty of a blind man's life lies in making anyone believe that he can score. That was it. The touch of pity stung me. I wanted to live on equal terms with others. In the collision of life, pity and sympathy cut little ice. The hardest thing for a blind man is to feel he is getting more pity than sympathy. Even in my campaign for the United States Senate I

told the people that I wanted no votes given in a spirit of compassion for my physical infirmities. I wanted votes given as they would be given to any other man, or none at all."

In the Walthall normal school there was a "moot senate" organized by the students, and here the blind youth displayed rare powers as a debater. One of the subjects introduced into the "moot senate" was a bill to relieve the political disabilities of Jefferson Davis. Gore was chosen to oppose the bill. Such a debate, carried on in the home State of the leader of the Confederate cause, aroused the pretended senators to a high pitch of excitement. The struggle was a long and furious one. Yet with the sentiment of the school and the community bitterly opposed to his attitude, the blind young scholar—whose father had been a Confederate soldier—won a majority of the "moot senate" to his side. But so deep were the emotions stirred by this feat of oratory that the question was not allowed to come to a vote and the "moot senate" was thereafter abandoned.

While Gore was attending the high school his closest companion was a classmate, Charles H. Pittman. This youth used to read to him. One day they found an old volume of the Congressional Record. Going out to the stable the blind student would stand there for hours while Pittman read to him the speeches of the lawmakers at Washington.

"I remember that stable very well," said Senator Gore a few weeks ago, "and I can recall the very moment in that thrilling experience when the ambition to be a United States Senator entered my breast, never to leave it, even in the darkest days and years which followed. From that time on I never allowed my hope to die out."

With this unshakable determination to enter the United States Senate, Gore, then twenty years old, was graduated from school, delivering a speech on the race question, the peroration of which was as follows:

"' But, Och! I backward cast my eye
On prospects drear;
An' forward, though I canna see,
I guess an' fear.'

"I hope that my fears are false. I hope that this problem may receive a just solution. I hope that the wisdom and patriotism which have guided our ship of state thus far may still be able to anchor it in a harbor of security and peace. I hope that future generations may remember this problem but as a dream of tradition, that future statements may



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THIS PORTRAIT OF SENATOR GORE CONVEYS A GOOD IMPRESSION OF HIS APPEARANCE TO-DAY. THERE ARE NO TRACES IN HIS FACE OF THE TERRIBLE STRUGGLE WITH BLINDNESS, POVERTY, AND ADVERSE CONDITIONS THROUGH WHICH HE AT LAST REACHED THE UNITED STATES SENATE

revert to it as a shadow without a substance, a wound without a scar, as a storm that arose in terror and tumult but abated in sunlight and calm; but whatsoever betide, be it weal or be it woe, an unflinching faith in the God of our fathers and un-

changing devotion to duty and justice, this should be the lode star of our people in this dark and troublous night."

That was the first public appeal of the

sightless Mississippian who, through years of poverty and disappointment, finally talked himself into the United States Senate.

During that winter Gore and his sister taught school for a few months. All the while his mother, a bed-ridden invalid, read to him history, biography and other subjects connected with his political plans; and he would sit by the bed, a strange smile on his blind countenance, dreaming and brooding and waiting for the day when he might take part in the great battle of politics like other men.

His great chance came in the Spring of 1891, when the local fame of his school speech on the race question brought him invitations to address farmers' picnics. This gave him opportunities to meet representative men in his county. The Populist movement was spreading rapidly and he joined it. In the State campaign for a legislature to elect a United States Senator he took up the cause of Barksdale against George, although as a boy he had lived in George's house.

He had to be led about among the crowds, but he developed a remarkable power over his audiences. While the multitudes roared at the sight of a blind man tragically protesting against existing conditions or tossing oratorical rainbow dust in the air, he studied the tones of their voices, imagined the look in their faces and planned how he might make them political prisoners of his tongue.

The blind orator shrank from no conflict. He even debated with Senator Money, whose tongue all Mississippi dreaded and who smiled majestically when told that his opponent in debate was "a poor blind schoolboy." Senator Money declared that, but for his antagonist's blindness, he would hold him personally responsible for his words—a deadly thing to say in Mississippi. Gore promptly replied, "Let him then blindfold himself and I will meet him."

That year he was actually nominated for the Mississippi legislature, but, being only twenty years old, he was legally ineligible. Yet his experience as an orator convinced him that blindness was no bar to a political career.

"The sympathetic thrill that moves a speaker and his audience a blind man can feel as well as any other," he said. "There is a current in the air that unites them. Sometimes the speaker is off, and sometimes the crowd is off; but the magnetic poles have got to be established."

In September of that year he went to the

law school at Cumberland University, Tennessee, and studied law for ten months. He was one of the leading six students in a class of forty-two. This experience cost him \$331 and he returned to his Mississippi village with only twenty-five cents in his pocket, in a suit of clothes he had worn for fourteen months. He had almost been compelled to leave the law school months before for the lack of suitable clothing.

Yet his unquenchable ambition to reach the United States Senate grew more intense as the difficulties of his situation increased.

Gore's father had taken up the practice of law in Walthall and, on returning from the law school in 1892, the youth was welcomed as an assistant in the office. That year, too, he was a presidential elector on the Populist ticket, attacked Grover Cleveland on the stump and carried his county.

The practice of law was not an inspiring occupation in Walthall. There were actually forty-five lawyers in that small, poor village. The blind advocate tried a few cases. He defended a schoolmate charged with killing an old man near the schoolhouse in the woods where lawyer and client were once classmates. But there were many lawyers and few cases, and it was difficult to earn the barest living.

It is precisely at this point in their lives that so many men weakly succumb to what, in self-justification, they call inexorable fate. Failing to win success after a fair and brave trial in one place, they settle down to ruin by stagnation, forgetting that it is better to wear out than to rot out, or that even the lobster has intelligence enough to quit a shell too small for further development.

After a two years' effort to earn a living as a lawyer in the place of his birth, Gore decided to go to Texas. The fact that he was completely blind and did not know a single person in that great State could not daunt him. He had a smile to win friends and a tongue to persuade. If the people of Walthall had grown accustomed to the idea that a blind man could not rise to leadership, perhaps the adventurous mind of Texans might accept him on his merits.

Having saved \$40, he started in April, 1894, for Texarkana, arriving there an absolute stranger with only \$21 in his pocket. He secured a boarding house and promptly offered himself to the Populist leaders for service in the approaching State and county elections. His political speeches brought in money enough to pay his expenses, but he

found no chance to practise law. In the winter he went back to Walthall and for a year made another desperate effort to win success as a lawyer. He was nominated for Congress by the Populists, but was defeated. Yet his speeches in the campaign attracted much attention.

On the last day of the year 1895 the sightless and unsuccessful lawyer decided to abandon the struggle in his native spot and to go back to Texas. Before leaving Walthall he made a vow that he would never enter the village again until he could return to his neighbors a United States Senator.

The desire to be a Senator had become a consuming fire in the blind man's breast. The oath he took on leaving Mississippi was kept through years of penury and strife. Again and again in his final fight for the Senate he told his audiences of his solemn pledge and declared that he did not care so much to enter the Senate as he did to go back to Mississippi without breaking his oath.

Gore was only twenty-five years old when he made that vow and left his native State forever.

He was a man of middle height, straight, broad-shouldered. Constant practice in public oratory, added to a naturally grave manner, had given him a bearing of singular dignity. His brow was high and broad, splendidly overhanging his maimed eyes; his nose was

fine and straight; his mouth full and sensitive; his face broad and plump; his powerful curving jaws meeting in a well-moulded, round chin. It was almost a Greek face, pale and smooth, but full of nobility and strength. For all the tragic shadows of the hopeless eye-sockets, the set of the erect figure, the poise of the compact, square head and the lively play

of emotions in the mobile countenance conveyed anything but a sense of helplessness.

Nor did Gore feel helpless. His friends and confidants might think his ambition to go to the Senate the crazy overtone of an imagination overwrought by enforced introspection; but he who heard the multitude everywhere respond to his voice, he who had been carried on the shoulders of a shouting and exulting crowd, dwelt inwardly in a world where nothing seemed impossible. His clothing might be shabby and his meals scanty; he might have to feel his way with a walking stick or be



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MRS. THOMAS P. GORE, WHOSE COURAGE AND INTELLIGENCE HELPED TO PLACE HER BLIND HUSBAND IN THE SENATE

led about by the hand. But what of it? He had ears to hear the complaints of the people about him; he had a brain to think and he had a tongue to talk—these were enough for a man in a world full of opportunity; a sound argument, a lofty sentiment were just as convincing in the mouth of a blind man as in the mouth of a man who could see.

"I ask no odds of any man because of my affliction," he said. "All I ask is fair play. I will win on my merits or not at all."

That year in Texas was a hard one. Gore threw himself into politics with passionate energy. He was a delegate to the Populist Convention at St. Louis which nominated Mr. Bryan and seconded the nomination. In December, 1896, he and his brother opened a law office. It was a fierce struggle with the world. His father, mother and brother lived with him. Sometimes they were without a single dollar. Again and again the family was reduced to the verge of physical suffering. Yet year after year they kept up the fight for existence without complaint. Nor did the blind lawyer once despair of reaching the Senate.

In April, 1899, Gore's fortunes had sunk so low that he appeared in the street with frayed clothing, broken shoes and a visage white with deprivation. One day it seemed as though he had come face to face with actual starvation, when an old negro woman paid \$2 which she owed him, and that saved the situation.

The Senate! The United States Senate! He would reach the goal of his ambitions yet. Shabby, hungry and in eternal darkness, there was in him an inextinguishable something that never allowed him to doubt it.

When Mr. Bryan was nominated at Kansas City in 1900 Gore found his way to the crowd that surrounded the convention. He was now a Democrat. Having borrowed a small sum of money, he managed to live in Kansas City for six days at a total cost of \$3.50. His lodging cost him fifty cents a night. He lived on nuts, canned beef and crackers. At the monetary convention he made a notable speech. He had just made a scanty meal on nuts. The pockets of his well-worn alpaca jacket were filled with crackers, the cheapest food he could exist on. No one who heard his voice ringing out over that scene of national enthusiasm was permitted to know, or even suspect, his poverty.

It might help him on his way to the Senate if he could make speeches in the neighborhood of a national convention, and what did food matter, so long as it actually sustained life? Those who saw him at Kansas City say that there was not a pluckier nor more smiling face to be seen.

Hurrying on to South Dakota—he had only \$7 left when he got there—Gore went to the State convention and secured an engagement to speak in the State during the Presidential campaign. In this way he picked up \$1,000. Then he went back to Texas and married a

beautiful girl. "It was love at first sight," he said laughingly.

After the Presidential campaign was over Gore's \$1,000, earned in the South Dakota tour, soon melted away, and little money came in to take its place. In 1901 things went so badly with him, and his senatorial prospects seemed so dim, that when an advertisement of an auction of land lots in the newly opened Kiowa, Comanche and Apache reservation in Oklahoma appeared in the newspapers, he decided to leave Texas and pursue his great ambition in the new country.

A year before, the lands of Oklahoma had been thrown open to settlers. At a given signal scores of thousands who had camped on the ground and waited in line for days rushed madly forward to stake off the best lots. Before the day was over Guthrie was a city of ten thousand inhabitants, Oklahoma City was soon as large, and by the end of the year the Territory had a population of sixty thousand, enough to entitle it to statehood under the Ordinance of 1787.

The voice of Oklahoma called loudly to the blind man in Texas. With statehood there would be two new United States Senators. There was welcome and enterprise in the spirit of Oklahoma, and the prairie dwellers might follow even a blind leader. He thrilled at the thought of it.

As a first step, the elder Gore, now a white-haired man, went to Oklahoma and became a notary public in the hope of earning fees from the land-crazy crowds. In July, 1901, the blind lawyer and his brother went to the new land, driving forty-five miles in a wagon to Fort Sill. Here Gore lived in a tent with his father and brother in the midst of an excited crowd. His father sat inside as a notary while he, attired in an alpaca coat, colored shirt and slouch hat, walked up and down before the tent, waving his hand and shouting, "Here's where you get your papers out! Here's the right place to get your land papers!" In the daytime he entreated the crowd; at night he slept on the ground.

Failing to draw a land claim, the Gores moved out four miles to Lawton, an encampment on the open prairie. Here fifteen thousand persons were living in tents where the wild blue-stem grass was waist high. It was a Babylon of gamblers, fakirs, farmers and business men, all waiting for the opening of the land on August 6th. There were grocery and hardware stores in tents; gambling tables and shows in tents; churches and saloons in



IN THIS DRAMATIC SCENE OF OKLAHOMA'S PIONEER TENT-LIFE, BLIND THOMAS GORE, A STRANGER AND ALMOST PENNILESS, BEGAN HIS STRUGGLE FOR A SEAT IN THE UNITED STATES SENATE

tents. Even newspapers were printed in tents. Poor men, rich men, preachers, thieves were mixed up in that picturesque, dramatic hurly-burly of mules, wagons, women and children. Men were killed, children were born, robberies were committed. Yet there was a certain sense of government, even in that tumult, and the blanketed and painted Indians, camped about on the naked prairie, had evidence of the capacity of the Anglo-Saxon to manage somehow and get results.

Listening to the babble of the crowd by day, and the howling of the coyotes beyond Cache Creek at night, the blind man nursed his hopes and dreamed of his political future. These people would have to be organized. They would divide into parties. They would choose leaders. The noises would die down, the community fall into order. He who had something to say and a voice to say it would be heard. The heavens seemed to open as he lay in his tent.

The Senate seemed far away to Gore at

this time, yet on August 2d, four days before the land was opened, a political mass-meeting was held in the camp and, standing on a wagon amid the tall prairie grass, he turned his white face to the crowd and made a speech on the glories of self-government and the coming statehood of Oklahoma. It was his first gun in the battle for the Senate.

On August 6th the town lots were sold, and the citizens of Lawton within an hour began to build their prairie town. The sound of hammers rang out, houses formed of timbers already sawed rose on all sides, and the work went on incessantly for months, Sundays included. But Gore continued until November 24th to live in his tent, on which he had hung his lawyer's sign.

Three days after the lots were sold, and while Lawton was still a tented camp, there was another political mass-meeting, this time in the big tent of Dick Russell, a saloon keeper. Gore was there and offered a resolution favoring the admission of Oklahoma and Indian Territory to the Union as a single State.

There were those in that heroic scene who wondered why a poor blind man should show such a passionate interest in the statehood question, but they were not in the secret that lighted his pale face and inspired his tongue.

Land! land! land! How they struggled and schemed for their homes! How they watched and prayed and bragged! Yet what were town lots, what even were acres and acres to a seat in the United States Senate and a power which the President himself might not ignore?

A few days later and the men of Lawton organized a citizens' committee to get a charter and organize a city government. Of course Gore was there and of course he was on the committee. Then a commercial club was organized by the tent-dwellers and Gore was on the committee to draft by-laws. He missed no opportunity that might lead to the Senate.

Presently he bought a small lot for \$155 and started to build a cottage through the help of a building and loan agency. When his wife reached Lawton in October Gore was still in his tent. His wife fell sick and for four months he was her only nurse, save when their baby came in January. When they moved into their own cottage and furnished it with a stove and a few articles of furniture they had only \$1 left. They had to rent out three of their five rooms.

The baby was born in desperately cold weather in a room heated only by a tiny cook-stove. It lived only seventeen days and was buried on the prairie.

That winter tried the man in him. For months he and his fair young wife lived on scanty portions of bread, beans and beef liver, with syrup made of sugar dissolved in water for dessert. He borrowed \$15 from a neighbor. Then he got \$125 as his share of the commission for selling a land claim and paid his debts. But the struggle for bare life was hard, and it is a fact that for the six years in Oklahoma before Gore reached the Senate, his grocery bills averaged \$12 a month, or about thirteen cents a meal.

All through this time his wife encouraged his political ambitions. She believed in him and he held his head high as he groped his way in the streets with a stick, puzzled at times to know where the next dollar was to come from, but more determined than ever to be a Senator. There was no self-pity in him. It was a hard thing to be blind and it was a hard thing to live insecure from one thin meal

to another. Still he faced it all with a smile and spurned pity as an insult.

"All I ask is the same chance that any other man has," he said. "I will win out yet."

They liked that brave spirit in Oklahoma, and although Gore was inwardly tormented by want, he made friends. The convinced man is always convincing and the blind and briefless lawyer's courage persuaded many that he would succeed somehow—pity changed to admiration, and admiration to confidence. It is strange that so often "the condition which high friendship demands is ability to do without it"; and Gore, out of the desperation of his poverty, was compelled to make the world follow him by sheer "bluff."

In April, 1902 Gore managed to go as a delegate to the Territorial convention that was to choose a Delegate to Congress from Oklahoma, and his speech in response to the welcome of the Mayor of Enid so struck the fancy of the delegates that there was a movement to make him the choice of the convention. He declined the honor in favor of others. It was a shrewd move and counter-balanced the fact that he was a newcomer in Oklahoma. The result was that he was elected to the Territorial Senate.

That summer the blind man had another terrible struggle to keep alive. One day in June he had only eight cents left. He held a war council with his wife to consider what they should do with the eight cents. It was decided that the money should be spent on postage in an effort to secure speaking engagements. The political fight had to be kept up at any cost. A Fourth of July address at the town of Ingersoll brought in \$22 above expenses. This, with \$4 a day for his two months' service in the Territorial Senate, saved the situation. He and his wife managed to live during his whole service in the legislature at a total cost of \$90.

Mrs. Gore took the place of his eyes. She became his political spur.

The fight for a seat in the United States Senate was now pressed systematically. Having introduced a child labor bill in the legislature and declared his friendship for organized labor, Gore spent the year 1903 in widening his acquaintance, attending picnics, barbecues and county fairs, lecturing for anything from \$5 to \$25, shaking hands with the crowds and smiling his way into their hearts.

Then came the Presidential campaign of 1904 and Gore got \$4 or \$5 a day from the Democrats for speaking in Indiana, Ohio and



THE BLIND OKLAHOMA SENATOR WITH HIS WIFE ON AN EXCURSION IN THE MOUNTAINS

Illinois. He had no desire to go back to the Territorial legislature, knowing that his great ambition could be better served by the publicity of service in the national campaign.

In 1905 he declined a good offer to lecture for the Knights of Pythias in order that he might speak at all sorts of political gatherings and invite his audiences to shake hands with him. It was hard to live, but he managed somehow. Everything had to give way to the great plan he had set for himself.

When the Oklahoma Constitutional Convention was held Gore did not attend it. But

his old classmate and roommate, Mr. Pittman, he whose readings in the stable at Walthall had first inspired the sightless boy with an ambition to go to the United States Senate, became the chairman of the committee on apportionment; and Gore's enemies have always charged that the political districts were "gerrymandered" to favor him.

Gore fought hard for Oklahoma's admission to the Union. No man was more active in the agitation. But he would not go to the national capital.

"I won't go to Washington till I go with the

right to speak and vote in the Senate," he said to his friends.

The Statehood bill was passed by Congress in 1906. Then the political air of Oklahoma was "full of razors" as the struggle for the two new senatorships began with the primary campaign to elect a legislature. Gore's opponents were both rich men who spent their money freely. He stayed in Guthrie, borrowing money to pay the \$4.50 a week which it cost him to live. Being at the capital he met men from all over the State and was able to make shrewd combinations.

It was a tragic thing to see a blind man harassed by poverty fighting against his rich rivals, one a banker and the other a lawyer, but, however he bled inwardly, Gore gave no sign that he saw anything pathetic in his situation. His friends wanted him to abandon his ambition for a time and run for Congress.

"It is the Senate or nothing," he replied.

In April, 1907, he began to make speeches all over the State. It cost him \$65 to get out a hundred thousand copies of a circular in which he announced the views on which he expected to be chosen as Senator, with much tall rhetoric about Jeffersonian principles and "the jeweled hand of greed picking the threadbare pockets of need." "I would rather expend money to build homes than battleships—to dig ditches than graves," he wrote. The soul of Oklahoma was addressed in such paragraphs as these:

"Nearly every necessary of life is to-day held in the iron grip of monopoly. They begin with the cradle and swaddling clothes, and do not end even with the coffin and the winding sheet. They tax the tomb. The mourner at the bier is not exempt from their cruel touch. The living cannot buy the ceremonies of the dead without paying tribute to the trusts. (Fortunately, there are no pockets in the shroud). They would, if they could, place a meter on the mother's breast and charge the infant so much per gram.

* * *

"Medicines are on the protected list, to encourage, I presume, those infant growing industries, the marble yard and the coffin factory.

* * *

"I hope to see the dawning of that golden day when courts, cabinets and congresses shall have as much respect * * * for the man that digs the coal and cuts the stone as they have for the man upon whose brow flames a circlet of gold and flashes a cluster of imperial gems."

He spoke on street corners, from the tops of boxes, from cart tails, anywhere, everywhere, night and day. The leading newspapers ignored him, while his rivals were able to buy

advertising space, and one of them hired brass bands, opera houses and advance agents. In March he had mortgaged his house for \$1,000; but the money was soon gone. To get his name on the primary ballot, under the rules of the Democratic State convention, he had to pay \$375. But on the last day allowed for the payment he found himself with only \$8. In sheer desperation he made out his check for \$375 and paid it in. A Mr. Young saved him by raising the money to meet the check.

As the voting drew near the blind candidate's circumstances became more desperate than ever. He was spending about \$24 a week for traveling expenses. To get out of money at that stage of the fight would have been fatal. He made from two to four speeches a day, although he would sit up all night in hotels to save paying for a bed, and ate only one meal a day. At times he would go from one day to another on cheese and crackers carried in his gripsack. So great was the physical ordeal that he lost thirty pounds weight. He had no light clothing and wore his thick winter suit in the fiercest summer heat. There were holes in the bottom of his shoes. His face was bloodless and haggard. One day his money gave out entirely. In spite of voluntary starvation he had failed to make it last. He had two speaking engagements that day but no means to reach his audience. In his agony he tried to place a second mortgage on his house, but failed. He went from one friend to another in a vain effort to borrow money. In a condition of utter despair he walked down the street, head bowed, walking-stick tapping the sidewalk before him, and stood on the corner, helplessly wondering whether he must at last confess defeat. He was a pitiful object as he stood there, racking his brain for some device to continue his struggle for the Senate.

Just then he felt somebody touch him. It was Thomas Dunn, a Republican banker. The blind man felt something slipped into his hand as Mr. Dunn whispered in his ear, "Pay this back when you can." It was \$50. Again he was saved. Between that time and the voting he was able to borrow \$100.

Gore won his fight in the primary election and was elected to the United States Senate by the legislature, drawing the short term. The struggle cost him \$1,100, exclusive of the \$375 he paid to get his name on the primary ballot. One of his opponents is said to have spent \$75,000.

When the blind Senator at last stood before

the legislature which had chosen him, on his thirty-seventh birthday, he made a speech against the "demon of imperialism" and "hydraheaded brood of trusts." Stretching his hands out and raising his radiant face he said:

"Much can be done by the general government for her youngest daughter and it must be done. The restrictions must be removed; the shackles must be stricken from our limbs; Prometheus must be unbound; the fountains of our prosperity must be unsealed.

"Many splendid cities have been designated as court towns, and each of them must have a federal building commensurate with its past, present, and prospective growth and greatness. So soon as these are served, there are other cities here that must receive consideration at the hands of the national government. The whistle of the rural mail carrier must be heard at the gate of every farmer within this State. Last but not least, the bankers and business men, the merchants and miners, the lawyers and the laborers, the physicians and farmers, must each and all receive their due share of garden seed."

It was a grand day for Oklahoma when her blind man got into the United States Senate.

Last year he went home and was reelected. When he reached Lawton a cheering crowd surrounded the carriage that took him and his wife to their cottage. As roar after roar broke on the air, he turned to his wife and whispered, "They don't seem to know that it's only me."

A few weeks ago the blind Senator sat in the five-feet-wide space that serves as his office in Washington. He was walled in by books. His face was as smooth and smiling

as though he had never known an hour of care. His two strong hands rested lightly on the top of his walking-stick. His head was carried high.

"There's more to be learned from failures than successes," he said. "Success is so often the result of accident."

He knotted his brow and turned his fine head in a sort of listening attitude.

"A fixed and unalterable purpose, pursued under all circumstances, in season and out of season, with no shadow of turning, is the best motive power a man can have.

"I've sat in physical darkness for twenty-seven years"—he made a gesture as if lightly brushing the thought away—"and if I have learned anything it is that the dynamics of the human will can overcome any difficulty. I've had to make the minimum of power serve the maximum of weight. A man must aim at a high and splendid mark. The worst he can do is to fail. Well, it was worth the struggle to get into the Senate."

"Now that you have been here for some time, what do you think of the Senate, Mr. Gore?"

"It's a pretty good bunch. I'd rather be the Senator of a sovereign State than the monarch of some Eastern power."

"You used to think the Senate was a millionaire's club. Have you changed your mind?"

"Of course the golden age of the Senate is already historical. It is no longer made up of orators"—with a faint sigh—"but of practical men of business and affairs."

Happiness

A Definition

By

Margaret W. Vandercook

SERENE with wrong undone, and good desired,
A labor loved and followed to a goal,
Wealth sufficient for the needs acquired
To keep the body, not to hurt the soul,
A little over, that it may be spent
In the high joy of generous giving;
A faith so sure of the divine intent,
It dignifies the deeds of daily living.



Golgotha

By

H. Graham Starr

Illustrations by J. A. Cahill

MORRIS jumped violently and threw his rain cape over the array on the table. Donnely and he exchanged startled glances and instinctively gazed at the helpless Mathews who grinned back at them inanely. The knock on the door was repeated.

"Open the door, gentlemen." The voice was quietly, ominously stern.

"The Infant!" Morris groaned in a whisper. "There's nothing for it." With a despairing look at the man on the bed, he drew the bayonet from the door jamb—an improvised lock—and threw open the door.

Captain Boswell stepped into the room and looked keenly around. Donnely and Morris stood rigidly at attention. The officer's eyes fell on the bed and noted the intoxicated Mathews with a slight nod.

"I suppose there is only one explanation to this breach of discipline," he said quietly. "This is your room, Mr. Morris. I presume you will defer any explanation until orderly room to-morrow."

Both young men remained silent.

The officer took a pad from his pocket: "Mr. Donnely, Mr. Morris;" he stepped closer to the bed and looked more intently at the slouching figure. His jaw fell and he fingered the writing pad nervously. "Mr. Mathews," he went on calmly. At the sound of his name, Mathews lurched unsteadily to his feet and stood swaying beside the bed.

"Who y' callin' you pasty faced Chinese idol!" he said drunkenly. "Come snoopin' 'roun' corners an' stealin' up'n us, you low lived——"

"That'll do, Mathews, you're forgetting yourself," the officer interrupted, while the two cadets held their breath.

"You'd talk to me!" bellowed the drunken cadet. "You'd tell me I don't know what'm doin'!" Before any one could move a finger he swept up the bayonet from the floor where it had fallen and hurled it with all his strength at the Infantry officer. The side of the haft struck him fairly in the throat. He staggered back a pace, then leaped forward and felled Mathews to the floor with a blow on the jaw. There was a dramatic silence. The two cadets forgot discipline and bent over the fallen man. Boswell stood silent, his face white as chalk. He held his throat with one hand and tried to swallow. Mathews was lifted to the bed and immediately gave way to loud drunken snores.

Morris and Donnely resumed their position of attention. In the fracas the cape had slipped from the table. The Infantryman glanced at the pile of empty bottles and the few remaining full ones. He turned to them.

"You gentlemen will see the wisdom of keeping silent about this," he said calmly.

"We're mum, Sir," said Morris quickly. "It was provocation——"

"Silence!" thundered the young officer. "How dare you imply such a thing." He

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